

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 DODE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07
NSAE-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 HA-05 /062 W
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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2269
INFO AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: MASS, UK, ES
SUBJECT: BRITAIN CANCELS ARMS SALE TO EL SALVADOR

SUMMARY--HMG JANUARY 19 ANNOUNCED CANCELLATION OF A
CONTRACTED SALE OF 15 REBUILT ARMORED CARS TO EL
SALVADOR, BOWING TO PARLIAMENTARY AND PUBLIC OPPOSITION
TO THE TRANSACTION. END SUMMARY

1. THE CABINET RECENTLY RECONSIDERED THE ALREADY
CONTRACTED \$L.8 MILLION SALE OF 15 RECONDITIONED ARMORED
VEHICLES TO EL SALVADOR AND DECIDED NOT TO PROCEED. THE
CABINET DECISION WAS ANNOUNCED JANUARY 19, AS THE
VEHICLES WERE ABOUT TO BE LOADED FOR SHIPMENT. THE
FOREIGN OFFICE ANNOUNCEMENT READ: "THE BRITISH
GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED THAT THE CONTRACT FOR THE SALE OF
ARMORED VEHICLES TO EL SALVADOR SHOULD BE CANCELLED.
THIS DECISION WAS TAKEN BECAUSE OF THE SITUATION IN
CENTRAL AMERICA".

2. PARLIAMENTARY AND PUBLIC OPPOSITION TO THE SALE HAD
MOUNTED STEADILY IN RECENT WEEKS, AND WAS BASED PRIMARILY
ON THE SALVADORAN GOVERNMENT'S POOR RECORD ON HUMAN
RIGHTS. ITS REFUSAL TO PUBLICLY RENOUNCE POSSIBLE USE
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OF THE VEHICLES TO SUPPORT GUATEMALA'S CLAIM TO BELIZE
REINFORCED OPPOSITION TO THE TRANSACTION. CATHOLIC AND
OTHER CHURCH GROUPS JOINED VARIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS
ORGANIZATIONS TO MOUNT A VIGOROUS CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE
SALVADORAN SALE, AND THEY WERE ABLE TO ATTRACT CONSIDER-
ABLE SUPPORT FROM PARLIAMENTARIANS, PARTICULARLY AMONG
LABOR MPS. AT LEAST TWO GROUPS OF BACKBENCH LABOR MPS

MET WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS IN
EFFORTS TO BLOCK THE SALE. THEIR PERSISTANCE PAID OFF.

3. THE LABOR GOVERNMENT, WHICH HAS NO GREAT LIKING FOR
GEN. ROMERO AND HIS REGIME, EVIDENTLY CONCLUDED THAT THE
SALE WAS NOT WORTH THE POTENTIAL LOSS OF GOOD WILL
AMONG ITS SUPPORTERS IN PARLIAMENT, ESPECIALLY SINCE
THE TRANSACTION DID NOT EFFECT EMPLOYMENT (THE SALES
WOULD HAVE BEEN FROM EXCESS STOCKS, NOT NEW PRODUCTION)

BREWSTER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARMS, SALES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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